

# The Semaphore

*A Publication of the* TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS

## **A Saloonist's View of North Beach**

**see page 5**

**Issue 188**

**Summer 2009**



# THE SEMAPHORE # 188 SUMMER 2009

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## SEMAPHORE STAFF:

EDITOR: Art Peterson, 101A Telegraph Hill, 956-7817, [apeterson@writingproject.org](mailto:apeterson@writingproject.org)

AD SALES: Kathleen Cannon, 776-6014, [cannonpk@aol.com](mailto:cannonpk@aol.com)

BUSINESS MANAGER: Gail Switzer, 341 Filbert, 788-8667, [gail\\_switzer@yahoo.com](mailto:gail_switzer@yahoo.com)

TYPESETTING/DESIGN: Chris Carlsson, Cloverleaf Productions, 608-9035 [cc@chriscarlsson.com](mailto:cc@chriscarlsson.com)

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# PRESIDENT'S CORNER

by Vedica Puri

**T**he THD Board recently voted on two important issues to the neighborhood. This column, and parts of this issue, are dedicated to the issues related to those votes.

First, the THD Board voted on the current proposal to build the Central Subway from Townsend Street to Chinatown/North Beach.

The prospect of having a subway is exciting if done the right way. We whole-heartedly support the possibility that San Francisco could someday have a subway system as reputable as New York City. The Central Subway project could be a step in the right direction as long as we do not lose the very fabric of our neighborhoods the subway is meant to service.

While THD has long supported a robust public transportation infrastructure, the Board's unanimous vote expressed on-going concerns over future impacts the project could have on the northeast corner of the City. It is important that we work to

ensure that building this new billion dollar subway will not lead to the demolition of existing housing or historic buildings or create pressure to raise height limits in the future.

I believe the Board's position is important because it can be used as a starting point to reinforce the basic planning and preservation principles this organization and its membership have long advocated for. We want to ensure that the subway project will not create extraordinary pressure to turn North Beach, Chinatown and surrounding neighborhoods into an extension of Downtown. We are committed to working with the City to make sure that the subway project does not end up creating a situation

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## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

where demolition and displacement occur. I am hopeful that as this project moves forward we can use this as an opportunity to strengthen protections for our community, ensure affordable housing is not lost, safeguard our historic resources and protect existing height limits from the excuse that new high-rise buildings are needed along the subway route.

The second important vote by the board involved the current plan to demolish the existing North Beach library and build a new library on the now infamous "triangle."

The Board voted that THD support preserving the existing library and renovating and expanding it to meet the various needs of the community. The Board concluded that the "THD supports open space on 701 Lombard (the "triangle") consistent with the purpose for which the City purchased the parcel. The THD also supports a thorough, objective master planning effort for Joe DiMaggio Park

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and Playground that includes retaining the existing library and exploring Mason Street options." Some have hailed this position and others have vilified it. Whatever your thoughts, we decided to do something a little different in this issue of the Semaphore. We are publishing a special insert that contains five letters supporting the current plan to demolish the existing library and five letters supporting retaining and renovating the existing library (ie, not demolishing it). We also include an article about the history of the eight libraries throughout San Francisco designed by the architectural firm of Appleton and Wolfard. The North Beach library is one of those libraries.

There are numerous issues around the North Beach library plan that many THD members feel very strongly about. Instead of trying to explain, defend or tackle them all in this column, I urge you to read the special insert, visit the existing library and take a moment to imagine what could be.

As always, feel free to email me with any thoughts, suggestions or comments. I hope to see you at one of our upcoming social events.



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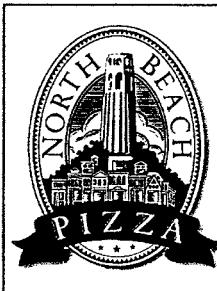


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# A SALOONIST'S VIEW OF THE NORTH BEACH SALOON CULTURE

By Ernest Beyl

**I** am a saloonist—that is one with a fervent appreciation of fine saloons. No, I don't mean bars or cocktail lounges. I mean saloons, the best of which share certain qualities.

A good saloon provides shelter from an encroaching world; it's a second home, often an extension of a small studio or apartment. At a good saloon the management will loan you money, take your messages, or tell callers you are not there (even if you are). The bartender will know your name and beverage of choice and engage you in conversation—trivial or existential.

A good saloon is like a good private club, but better—no rules, no dress code, and no stuffiness that masquerades as good fellowship.

A saloon culture has existed in San Francisco right from the town's boozy beginnings. Even 1840s Yerba Buena, the sleepy Mexican outpost on the bay, offered its 400 hardy residents elemental drinking establishments called *cantinas*.

With the Gold Rush of 1849, miners, merchants, adventurers, clerks, entrepreneurs, gamblers and just plain ruffians flocked to our town, thirsty, hungry and in search of companionship. Saloons sprang up to provide the necessary social ambience. Soon there

was whisky, gambling, conversation, music and even prostitution—your five basic mood groups.

Enterprising would-be saloon keepers threw up leaky tents or rough wooden shacks. Abandoned ships were dragged to high ground and turned into saloons and boarding houses.

By 1852, when the population of San Francisco grew to 50,000, some saloons had become more than simple beer or whisky joints. They were now elaborate melodeons or concert saloons, but they still featured, as one advertised, "freedom from constrained etiquette," one hallmark of your fine saloon.

It was not long after that sailors, visiting the strip of Pacific Avenue (then Pacific Street) between Sansome and Montgomery peppered with saloons, gambling joints, dancehalls and brothels, labeled the area the Barbary Coast, likening it to the pirates' lair in North Africa.

By 1862 there were more than 1,000 saloons in San Francisco—some of which had the qualities of the "fine saloons" we have been musing about. More than 300 were grocery saloons, many on the slopes of Telegraph Hill. Homeward bound working stiffs stopped off for a sack of flour or some other staple and there, among the foodstuffs, they found a plank suspended between two barrels where they could wet their whistles with beer, grappa or some other combustible.

San Francisco saloon culture resurrected itself from the catastrophic earthquake and fire in 1906. And, between 1920 and 1933, survived Prohibition in the form of ubiquitous speakeasies. The classic San Francisco speakeasy was Izzy Gomez's which operated at 848 Pacific Avenue. Izzy, a portly, handsome man who always wore a black fedora, not only served booze, but also thick steaks and other

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restoratives. William Saroyan, who knew a thing or two about San Francisco saloons, immortalized Izzy Gomez's establishment in *The Time of Your Life*, his 1939 Pulitzer Prize-winning drama.

So we've established that San Francisco has always been a thirsty town. But how about North Beach? The answer, of course, is that North Beach has been an especially convivial neighborhood for saloon culture. In fact, it is in this favored enclave where many of the city's finest saloons are located. The ingredients of the fine saloon we've already mentioned, as well as some of its other characteristics, are present in many North Beach drinking establishments.

**Longevity seems a characteristic of good saloons.** The oldest, continuously operated saloon in San Francisco is on Upper Grant Avenue at Fresno Street. It's called, naturally enough, The Saloon and opened back in 1861 as part of the Fresno Hotel. But other saloons go way back, or far enough back to have established the cache of permanence. There's Tosca, on Columbus Avenue. The original Tosca opened elsewhere in North Beach in 1919 by two brothers from Italy. Specs, at 12 Adler Place, right off Columbus, was a speakeasy during Prohibition. La Rocca's Corner on Columbus dates back to the 1930s; Gino & Carlo, on Green Street, goes back to 1942, and Capp's Corner, at Powell and Green, was established in 1963.

And the Washington Square Bar & Grill, founded by Ed Moose and Sam Deitsch in 1973, just keeps



being reincarnated. The present WSB&G, lovingly restored, is under the direction of folk singer-publi-can Liam Tiernan.

**History and myth are ingredients of saloon culture.** The story goes that The Saloon was saved in the 1906 earthquake and fire by a water brigade that refused to put the hotel's resident hookers out of business. And it's not hard to believe that, back in the 40s, a gangland hit took place in the basement at La Rocca's.

**Fine saloons have fine saloon keepers.** Specs Simmons took over this eponymous establishment in the 1960s. Simmons is a gregarious, left-over bohemian from the days when bohemians stalked

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## North Beach Saloon Culture *continued from page 6*

North Beach. Joe Capp, of Capp's Corner is a character who appears to step right from Damon Runyan's *Guys and Dolls*. Newspaper delivery kid, truck driver, boxer with a broken nose, boxing promoter, gambler and restaurateur, always with a big black cigar stuck in his mouth, and an attitude.

And, of course, there was the late Enrico Banducci, of Enrico's on Broadway, the melodramatic, Italian-American impresario considered by devotees to have been the Mayor of North Beach. Enrico once said of his celebrity clientele, "I would play a little Mozart for them on my violin and sing a little Puccini (Enrico was a talented classical violinist and operatic vocalists) and feed them my grandmother's minestrone. Sinatra liked my ravioli." What about Woody Allen? "He was always too nervous to eat."

**While fine saloons share admirable ingredients, they also possess features that make them special.** There's the old Wurlitzer juke box at Tosca loaded with Puccini and Verdi, the genitalia of a walrus at Specs, and, at La Rocca's, the sign over the bar reading "Drink with Dignity." More substantively, there are 20 beers, stouts and ales on tap at O'Reilly's on Green, and there's Gino & Carlo's bi-weekly, family style lunch. All you can eat and a lot of Tony Soprano-style conversation.

**While fine saloons are intended for regular folks, the rich, famous and infamous often drop by to kibbutz.** At Tosca, Nick Nolte, Nicolas Cage and Sean Penn spend time in the private back room that once was used by local Italians for card games. At La Rocca's, Joe DiMaggio dropped in occasionally. John Huston, Frank Sinatra, Carol Channing, Duke Ellington and John Steinbeck often joined the late

night fervor at Enrico's. Vesuvio regulars included, of course, Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and Bob Dylan, but also the violinist Yehudi Menuhin..

But the philosophical question that preoccupies hard core saloonists is this: Are the saloons that we have known and loved a dying institution?

To pursue our inquiry we talked to Michael McCourt, celebrated San Francisco bartender, behind the plank at the Washington Square Bar & Grill. McCourt enlightened us. "I notice a renewed interest in saloons," he stated with conviction. Then he added with the bluff assurance only an Irish bartender can muster, "It's not just about imbibing—that's drinking to you—saloons are also places to engage in the gentle art of social discourse and to find out who has died recently." And then (pause), "Nowadays, people are dying who never died before."

Those who may believe that the saloon culture is disappearing point to the fact that people don't drink as much alcohol as they once did. Certainly health concerns are paramount. Nevertheless, the saloon culture is not totally dependent on alcohol. Even former drinkers still frequent saloons, sit at the bar and sip soda water. Like many good things, saloons have waxed and waned over the years. For now, we saloonists optimistically conclude that saloon culture is moderately healthy and the glory days are returning.

**Ernest Beyl**, an occasional contributor to *The Semaphore*, is a diligent researcher on the subject of saloons and anxiously awaits the return of their glory days which he firmly believes are right around the corner. His devotion to saloons is matched only by his devotion to iceberg lettuce.



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# FROM THE DESK OF SUPERVISOR CHU

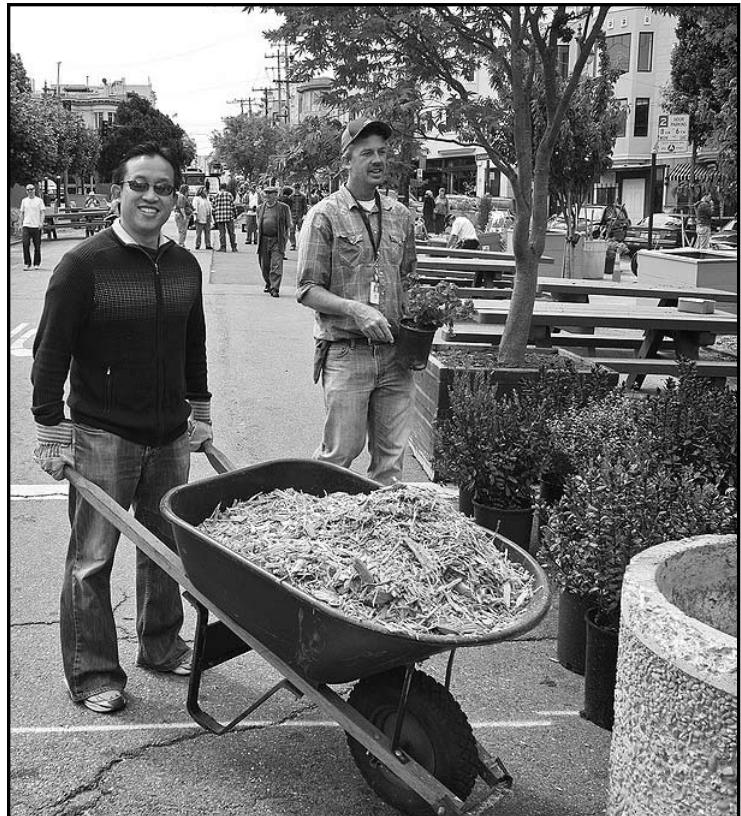


As barbecue grills grow cool and schools start again, I hope that everyone has had a wonderful summer. The summer months have been a very busy time at City Hall and throughout District 3. Here are a few highlights:

## Budget:

After one of the most grueling political battles of recent memory, the Board of Supervisors finally passed our city's budget on July 28<sup>th</sup>, closing the largest

budget deficit of \$438 million in San Francisco's recent history. While the Mayor's initial budget proposal called for deep cuts to crucial city services while simultaneously increasing other areas of government, the final budget negotiated between the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors shared the sacrifice of balancing the budget across all city departments, without having to lay off any police officers, firefighters, nurses, or teachers. The Board negotiated the largest add-back in the city's history (the difference between the Mayor's proposed budget and the final agreed-upon budget) to ensure funding for critical public health and social services to protect our city's most vulnerable populations during our economic recession. I am proud that unlike Sacramento, we were able to work through our differences and agree upon a budget that reflects our shared San Francisco values.



David Chiu, a working Supervisor!

## North Beach Library:

As many of you know, the current North Beach Library is headed for a major overhaul. When Mayor Christopher built the current library as part of a quest to build libraries on city park land, the final outcome was a library that inadequately serves library users, and a park that inadequately serves park users. As part of a plan underway to rebuild the library and expand the park, an Environmental Impact Review is being conducted to determine the feasibility of—and alterna-

*continued on next page*

## From the Desk of Supervisor Chiu

tives to—building a new library on the parking lot triangle at 701 Lombard and turning one block of Mason Street into park land.

Based on consensus worked out between project supporters and opponents, we agreed to a temporary closure of Mason Street between Columbus and Lombard, to ascertain once and for all whether a permanent closure would significantly adversely affect North Beach. As part of the closure, neighborhood volunteers and staff from several city agencies worked together to create a temporary “park” inside the closure, and neighbors have planned a series of events on the closed portion of Mason.

### Broadway:

I have spent considerable time tackling the issues of violence on Broadway Street and around the city stemming from late-night entertainment-related violence. While many entertainment venues self-regulate themselves as they should, there are still too many clubs that have not responded to violent incidents and neighborhood complaints; moreover, the city agency responsible for regulating these clubs—the Entertainment Commission – has been unable or unwilling to tackle these problems. To this end, I have proposed and supported legislative measures to beef up the Commission’s regulatory

powers and obligations; assuming the passage of the legislation, we will know once and for all whether the Commission is capable of fulfilling its mission.

I also have been working with the founders of the newly-created Broadway Entertainment and Cultural Association (BECA). Founded in the wake of last year’s unsuccessful effort to create a new Broadway community benefit district, BECA is a non-profit group comprised of business owners along the Broadway corridor, with the aim of decreasing violence and beautifying the neighborhood. On a trial basis, BECA has engaged the services of a security firm to assist and augment the efforts of the Police Department. BECA is also co-ordinating efforts to beautify the Broadway corridor, and is planning a rollout of hanging baskets such as the ones currently displayed on Grant Avenue, as well as cleaning crews to steam-clean sidewalks. Fingers crossed for all of these efforts.

### Vacant Buildings:

One result of the current recession has been an increase in the number of vacant and abandoned buildings throughout the city, which has contributed to neighborhood blight, crime and a decline in property values. To alleviate this situation, at the suggestion of many constituents, I introduced and passed legislation requiring the owners of vacant buildings to register their property with the Department of Building Inspection. The legislation also requires that property owners maintain the exteriors and interiors of their properties, secure properties to prevent unlawful entry by strangers, and obtain appropriate levels of insurance. I hope that this legislation will minimize neighborhood blight and foster public safety during these tough economic times. ☺



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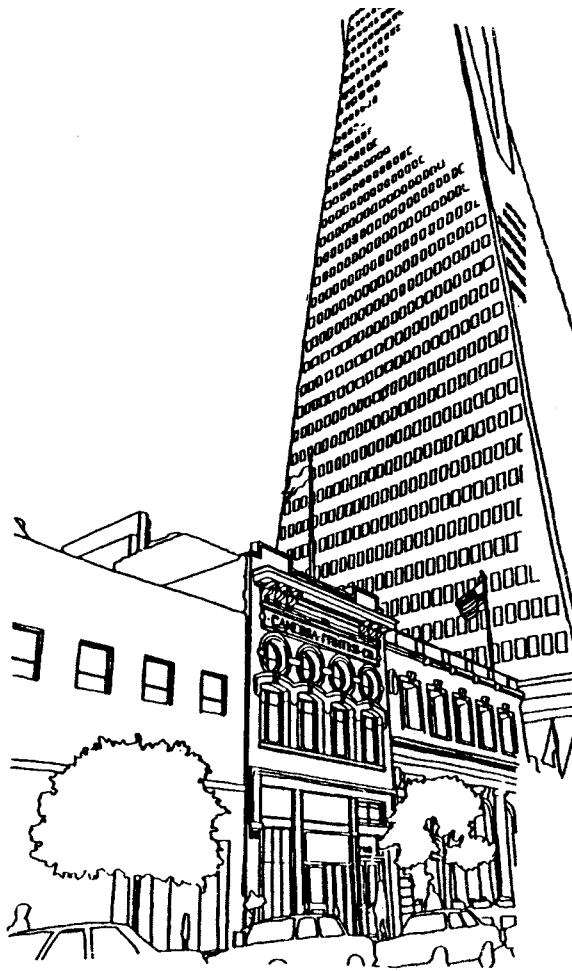
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# WHY ARE THERE SO MANY VACANCIES IN NORTH BEACH?

by Cathy Dooley, President, North Beach Merchants

**O**n everyone's minds these days, with the national downturn of the economy, is the state of North Beach's commercial district. The question arises, why so many vacancies and what can we do about it? Some of the statistics may surprise you. Surveys taken by THD in 1986, in 1999, and again in 2007 show that there were 45 storefront vacancies in 1986, 38 in 1999, and 30 in 2007. [see *Semaphore* Issue #180, Summer 2007 "North Beach Neighborhood Commercial District Controls at 20 —A Survey of Changes"] Compare that to a survey of vacancies taken in August of this year, which shows a total of 32 vacancies. A breakdown of these 32 currently vacant storefronts reveals that 3 are leased but are currently unoccupied, 9 are simply empty and are not for rent, and 20 are vacant and for lease.

Let's take a closer look at these numbers. A good example of an unoccupied but leased space is 501 Columbus—the former site of JB's Hamburgers. It was leased in April of 2007 for a new, small self-service restaurant. The new tenant received a building permit on August 2, 2007 and began renovations shortly thereafter, with the anticipated opening date

of a new restaurant slated for November 2008. But the restaurant is still empty and covered with plywood and graffiti. A conflict over who is financially responsible for repairs—landlord or tenant—seems to have completely stalled the project with

no new opening date in sight. This category also includes several properties owned by WB Coyle—1429 Grant Avenue and 454 Columbus—both long vacant with unspecified plans to eventually be reoccupied by the owner.

As to the next category of vacancy, storefronts simply not for rent, we can look to the perhaps the most egregious example, 1546 Grant Avenue, formerly Victor's Restaurant. This property has been shuttered and not for rent for almost 25 years. The owner has been approached many times by would-be tenants, only to be turned away and told it is not for lease. In the meantime, it has become rundown and

a popular site for homeless encampments and illegal drug activities. Another example of this type of situation is the old North Beach Video storefront on the 1300 block of Grant Avenue. Closed and reduced in size in order to give more space to Dupont Thai, it has remained empty and not for rent for a number of

*continued on page 12*



1546 Grant Avenue

years in spite of interested tenants.

Lastly, we have the 20 "for lease" commercial vacancies in North Beach. Why do they become vacant? Why do they remain vacant for long periods of time? The reasons are complex and there is certainly no one-size-fits-all answer for every location.

Reasons that are common to all the City's neighborhood commercial districts at this time are the general downturn in the economy and the high cost of doing business in San Francisco as compared to other cities. Reasons more specific to North Beach include landlords asking for prohibitively high rents and the now negative reputation of North Beach as catering only to rowdy nighttime crowds, along with the ongoing weekend violence on nearby Broadway, which often spills over onto the streets of North Beach. Would-be retail business owners see this as a huge negative to locating here since people no longer think of North Beach as a shopping district. The loss of our former independently owned neighborhood-serving businesses—and the related difficulty of attracting others—can also be attributed in part to the lack of neighborhood support for such businesses, as residents leave the neighborhood to get cheaper prices at big box stores such as Costco and Office Depot.

### Unrealistically High Rents

Some landlords list their properties for unrealistically high rents, leaving them empty for years on end. For instance, the vacant storefronts at 1541 Grant Avenue and 1528 Grant Avenue were occupied at one time by successful neighborhood businesses (Columbine Design and Lilith), but the landlords in both cases chose to continue to raise rents until the tenants could no longer afford them and were forced to leave. And in both of these situations, the landlord listed the vacant storefronts for a substantially higher rent than what the previous businesses had paid. Both spots have been vacant (except for short term leases) for many years. Another example of a

vacant storefront with unrealistically high rent is 700 Filbert Street, formerly occupied by PIP, which has been vacant and covered with graffiti for many years. 524 Union Street, formerly occupied by the Paper Doll and more recently by Silhouettes and The Field Restaurant and Pub, has been vacant for years in spite of known interest by reputable would-be tenants. The good news is that a few of these long-term vacancies are finally starting to lower their asking prices. Perhaps we have the economy to thank for this.

Some of these locations are also asking for rent plus "triple net," which means the tenant is also financially responsible for property taxes on their portion of the building, along with building insurance and all repairs needed to the leased area, including the costs for major repairs. Often times, the "triple net" clause can be the straw that breaks the camel's back for small business owners.

Why would a building owner voluntarily leave a property empty rather than lower the rent to attract a tenant? Keep in mind that many of these properties are owned by entities that own numerous properties and have chosen to take a tax write-off on a particular space and wait for the next boom in the economy to deliver a tenant who will pay their asking price. These owners appear to be unconcerned with how their vacant properties negatively affect our neighborhood or the nearby businesses and are often owned by absentee landlords with no commitment to the long-term health of the neighborhood.

### Undesirable Street Activity

Pixie, a successful women's clothing shop previously located at 1400 Grant Avenue was driven out by repeated robberies, break-ins and threats made by unsavory drug-dealers, which unfortunately forced the store to close its doors. Reopened as a frozen yogurt shop, this business was short lived due to its failure to attract business.

*continued on page 13*

# UP AGAINST THE WALLS: THE MURALS OF NORTH BEACH

by Dick Boyd

**A**walk around North Beach can be a sensually draining experience. Scurrying about our daily rounds, it's easy to take for granted the many quality murals that adorn our neighborhood. So we're going to take a slower trip around the Beach to seek out a few of these creations.

**First stop: The hub of North Beach at Broadway and Columbus** where, over the New Sun Hong Kong Restaurant, is a huge mural, a tribute to North Beach jazz in the 50's and 60's. This is local artist Bill Weber's creation, begun in 1987 and completed eight months later in 1988, Weber worked on the piece a quarter at a time raising money in between quarters.

The main guys in the mural are members of

the Benny Goodman Trio, Teddy Wilson, piano, Goodman on clarinet, and the great Gene Krupa on drums. The selection of the trio as a centerpiece is appropriate for our progressive neighborhood as Goodman was the first white band leader to employ African American musicians, like Wilson, in his organization. The guitar player (not part of the trio) is Tony Klaus who, along with Weber, painted the mural. Higher up on the far right side is a picture of the building's owner at the time, Giovani Toracca, casting off a Bocce ball alongside Rick Barry #24, Warriors All Pro basketball star. On the bottom left are mayors Diane Feinstein, Willie Brown, Art Agnos and columnist Herb Caen.

Weber says a number of years earlier when he

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## North Beach Vacancies *cont'd from page 12*

### Possible Solutions

While it is a difficult task to attract and keep locally owned and operated businesses, I think we can all agree that our neighborhood wants to see these vacancies filled with a combination of attractive services, restaurants and retail establishments that will both serve our residents and attract visitors to the neighborhood.

One solution may be to encourage City Hall to streamline the permitting process for small business applicants whose proposed use is permitted under the Planning Code to allow a smoother process from conception to the opening of a new store. An important part of this process would be to clearly spell out the types of businesses that are (and are not) allowed at any particular address in order to end protracted attempts to install businesses that do not conform to our neighborhood Planning Code.

Another part of the solution may be to encourage

small businesses by developing some form of relief for small independently owned businesses from the many fees and taxes levied on businesses in San Francisco. Small business owners can only carry so much financial burden on their shoulders, especially when faced with our current economic condition.

Another possible solution is to institute some kind of City fee to be assessed on owners of longtime vacant commercial spaces that blight our corridors, with the intent to encourage them to offer their storefronts for lease at realistic rents.

In the end, though, it is up to us to decide the fate of North Beach by simply choosing to vote with our pocketbooks and making every effort to "shop North Beach" in order to preserve our beloved shops and services and attract new ones.

*Kathy Dooley is President of the North Beach Merchants Association*

## Murals of North Beach *continued from page 13*

was painting another mural (no longer there) outside Caesar's Restaurant on Bay Street back in the 80's, a 12-year-old boy was watching him work. The boy said, "When I grow up I'm going to own a lot of buildings and I'm going to have you paint a mural on all of them." That boy became the adult Toracca who also owns other North Beach buildings. Weber has created murals on some of them as well.

If the laundry isn't out to dry, on the Broadway side bottom right you can see, Mayors Gavin Newsom, Hungry Eye founder Enrico Banducci, Mayor George Moscone, and the "king of torts," Melvin Belli. Next to the window is Mayor Joe Alioto. To the left of the window is Bill Weber's dog. Above is City Lights founder Lawrence Ferlinghetti. Weber's daughters Tara and Delilah are there with a

pal, and son Tyler is tying his shoe. On the left, with the trumpet, is Tara's boy friend Michael. Behind the fire escape is a super sized Emperor Norton.

Restoration of the mural began in 2005 and has to wait for money again before the next phase can proceed. Precious Cheese Co. donated \$15,000 for what Weber has done so far.

**At Grant and Columbus**, check out the Viva Restaurant, (a one man operation called Ray's back in my day). The murals on the inside were created in 1992 by Vranas, a North Beach legend and its most prolific artist. He can be found occasionally having coffee at Café Trieste.

Another excellent Vranas mural, depicting the bounty of healthy produce from his native Greece, can be seen at the Health Food Store on

Grant. And then there's Vranas' 1996 creation at O'Reilly's on Green Street. Pass inside the establishment and you'll find his depiction of Irish authors James Joyce, Brendan Behan, Samuel Beckett, Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw, W.B.Yates, and Sean O'Casey. Vranas told me he had to do these murals when the bar closed at 2AM, and he often ended up sleeping there in a booth until the place reopened in the morning. Currently Vranas is painting a mural with a Naples setting at Pulcinella Restaurant, 641 Vallejo, that old timers will remember as Adolph's Restaurant. Central to the mural is the *comedia del arte* character, Pulcinella.

**Next stop Jasper Alley just West of Gino & Carlo.** Here you find the Dante Benedetti memorial mural. Dante was a North Beach legend that mentored hundreds of young men in baseball and life. He often fed them at his restaurant the "New



*continued on page 15*

## Murals of North Beach *continued from page 14*

Pisa" when it was located at the corner of Vallejo and Grant (now the King of Thai Noodle.) He paid for his players' equipment out of his own pocket. The mural depicts his old baseball players. Those still living are sitting facing the North Beach Field with their names on their jerseys. Those who have passed are represented as angels being looked over from the upper left by Dante who passed away in 2005. Frank Rossi, son of original Gino & Carlo's owner Donato Rossi, was one of Dante's players and after a recent stroke, was afraid he was going to be one of those angels, but he only made the DL (that's the Disabled List for the initiated) for a while and is now happily back behind the bar.

### Next stop: Café Divine at Union and Stockton

Near the Union Street entrance to this restaurant is a treasure rescued from probable oblivion by renowned



Vranas at Pulcinella

local musician Mal Sharpe and his wife Sandra. The picture/mural is a snapshot of both a storied restaurant/hangout and those habitués who contributed to its legacy. Here's the painting's amazing odyssey.

In June of 1999, Mal and Sandra were in a junk store in Berkeley. As they were getting ready to leave the owner dragged out a large picture with some people in it who looked vaguely familiar to them and said, "You really ought to buy this."

Sandra agreed, dragging Mal along, and so they bought this remarkable piece of art depicting—though they didn't realize it at the time—a certain era in North Beach history. They paid \$3,000 for it, by no means a paltry sum for something of an unknown worth. On investigation they found out that the 40 people in the painting were the heart and soul of the North Beach beat/art scene depicted here at their hangout, The Spaghetti Factory (now the Bocce Cafe). The couple decided that Enrico's Café would be a good slot for their acquisition. In 2000 Enrico's, courtesy of Mike O'Rourke and Ward Dunham, threw a party in honor of the piece's arrival back in North Beach. About 20 people in the painting showed up, plus a lot of those who formerly hung out at the Spaghetti Factory. Shortly after Enrico's



The Spaghetti Factory

## Murals of North Beach *continued from page 15*

changed hands, the picture moved to Café Divine.

The painting had been commissioned by Spaghetti Factory owner Freddie Kuh and was executed by Kaffe Fassett, probably in the early sixties. For his efforts Fassett was awarded a lifetime of free meals at the Spaghetti Factory that allowed him to bring friends in to join him for what most will remember was the worst spaghetti ever, even worse than Franco American right out of the can! A year later Fassett moved to England.

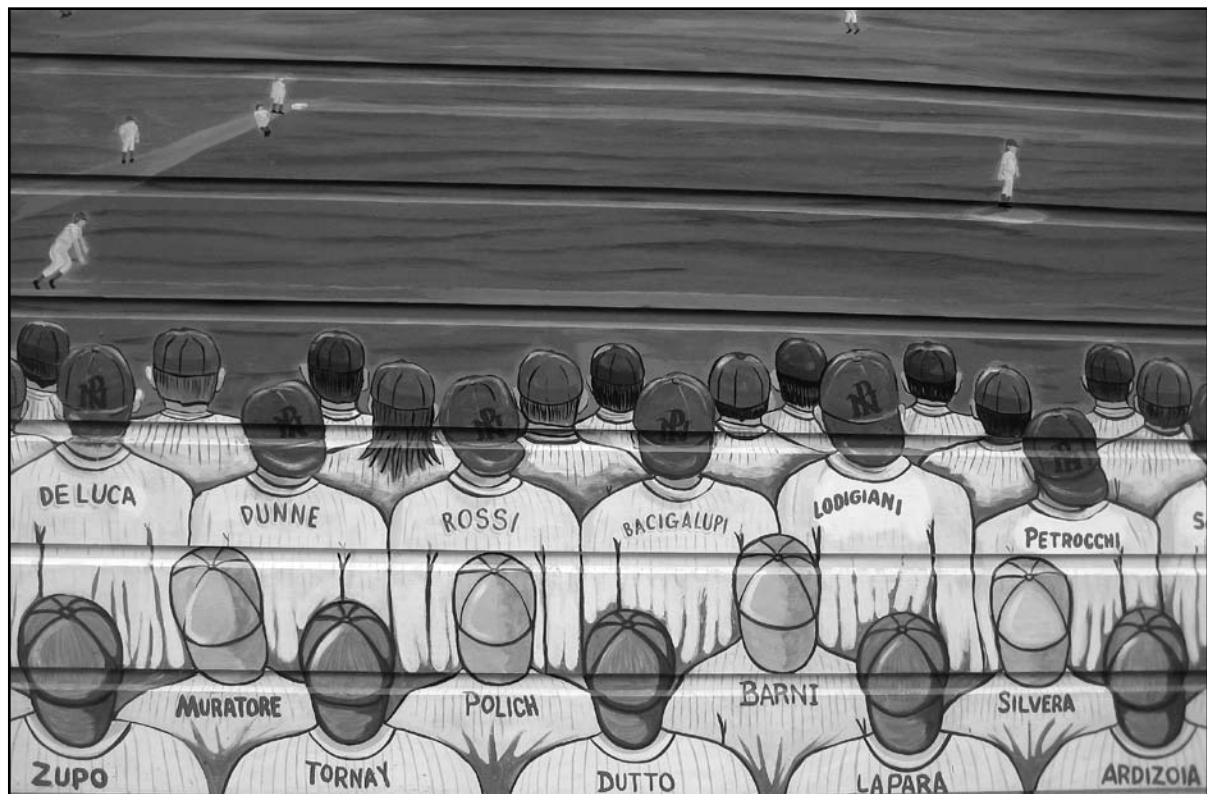
An identification of some of the denizens depicted in the piece is posted next to the work at Café Divine. There is a 30-minute documentary DVD by Mal, Sandra and William Farley available at the Café Divine, a great purchase for nostalgic old time North Beachers.

### Last Stop: The fence mural outside the skel-

**eton of the Pagoda Theater** This work was shepherded from its conception to its conclusion in 2009 by local writer Mel Clay. This is, in fact, the second of two murals at the site that Mel has orchestrated. The first, completed in 2005, had been destroyed mostly by posters being stapled on its surface. The "street artists" who created this mural are Cuba, sole creator of the first mural, and his pals, Gino, Mel and Rigo. No last names are used by street artists. These "taggers" may not be conventional artists, but they are good, and fellow taggers won't destroy their work. So far, so good on that!

There is a list of the sponsors' names on the Columbus Street side of the mural which include: Marsha Garland and the North Beach Chamber

*continued on page 17*



Dante Benedetti Mural

## Murals of North Beach *continued from page 16*

of Commerce, Jeffery's, The Nature Spot, Grant & Green, Marty Kirkwood, Blends S.F. and, of course, Mel Clay.

Notice the pit bull depicted in the mural. The dog belongs to one of the artists. Shortly after the mural was completed, Mel got calls saying the pit bull depicted was too vicious looking and frightened children passing by. So the artists painted a necklace with a peace sign around the dog's neck. Problem solved!

This brief tour is only a slim introduction to the public art of North Beach. The neighborhood is replete with visual surprises if you take the time to



The Pagoda

look around. Here are some other locations to take in:

**Romolo Alley and Broadway:** A great mural named "Gold Mountain" and painted by Ann Sherry in 1994 depicting achievements of the Chinese in San Francisco. Tragically it has been tagged big time.

**Chestnut and Mason:** The "Wash This" laundromat provides a great snapshot mural of North Beach.

**Francisco Middle School playground.** The message on all the murals is that education is the key to a better life. Sponsored by the San Francisco Art Commission, the mural was painted by Arch Williams with input on the theme from the students and completed about 1985.

A second mural at the school was sponsored by the school, the Telegraph Hill Center, and the San Francisco Anti Graffiti Program and can be seen on the wall adjoining Stockton Street. The work was created and supervised by teacher Fran Valesco and painted by teachers and students during off school hours. It's interesting to note that there has been no graffiti on these murals since 2001 when the students were involved in the Francisco Street mural.

**500 block of Green Street** The musical notes painted on the 101 Music store depict the actual melody of "Street of Dreams."

**Maggie McGarry's on Grant** On the back wall is a mural created by Nicola McCarthy done in 2006. Each face represents a real patron from the neighborhood. Nicola is the girl clapping her hands.



# NORTH BEACH UNIQUE

by Art Peterson

Most photos by Julie Jaycox

**W**hen the guidebooks speak of North Beach as being San Francisco's special neighborhood, they are usually referring to the cafes, the absence of chain stores, the one-of-a-kind characters who populate its streets. But we also know that our neighborhood is dotted with unique businesses. We asked proprietors of some of these establishments to put us in touch the most special item in their special stores.

## Enchanted House

This is one of a shrinking number of Kingfisher Bird Imperial Hair Ornaments that Peggy Ling has for sale at her Grant Street establishment. Her collection of about 100 of these pieces is perhaps the largest in the United States outside of a museum. (She once had 10,000!)

This 19<sup>th</sup> Century piece, like the others in her

collection, is coated with the glowing blue feathers of the kingfisher bird. In historic China these pieces were available only to the wealthiest classes. They are now fast disappearing, not only in the United States, but also in China.

1114 Grant Ave, 981-5850

## Aria

If there is a single shop in North Beach that deserves the label "unique," it would have to be Bill Haskell's Aria. Finding the special object amidst this collection of glass eyes, doll hands, old letters, and keys that don't fit doors presents a challenge for the most devoted urban archeologist. However, this "growler," as he was known to kids in early 20<sup>th</sup> century France, rises to an unchallenged level of specialness. Acquired by Bill on one of his many trips to the Paris Flea Market and Parisian environs, this extravagant pull toy must have delighted the *garçon* who had everything. Anatomically correct, the mutt is capable of emitting a rather feeble and incongruous bark, given the animal's pit bull-scary demeanor.

1522 Grant Ave, 433-0219



A Kingfisher Original

### XOX Truffles

Jean Marc and Casimira Groce's 12 year old hole-in-the-wall truffle shop in the 700 block of Columbus is easy to miss. Fortunately, for the Groces, the writer from USA Today kept looking. The Groces make "the best truffles in America," the critic enthused. This and other accolades have sent an international clientele scampering to this shop on a block sadly dominated by too many empty store fronts.

Part of the Groces' secret is that XOX truffles are made to be eaten now. "Shelf life" is not part of the couple's lexicon. These truffles are soft, fragile, and—like their fungal namesakes—lumpy.

The Groces make over twenty flavors of truffles ranging from soy vegan, to Kailua to hazelnut, but do they have a flavor that qualifies as unique? According to Jean Marc, "yes." His ravishing caramel truffle is the only one made in the United States, maybe in the world. And for good measure he has just created another original: cayenne-tequila, a flavor that will transport one's taste buds on a sweet and peppery journey to old Mexico.

754 Columbus, 421-4814



### Fog Hill Market

One would think that in our sophisticated and polyglot neighborhood one could find foreign newspapers at every corner cigar store. Alas, the cigar stores are gone and exotic newspapers are hard to find. One needs to either climb or descend Telegraph Hill to

*continued on next page*



## North Beach Unique continued from page 19

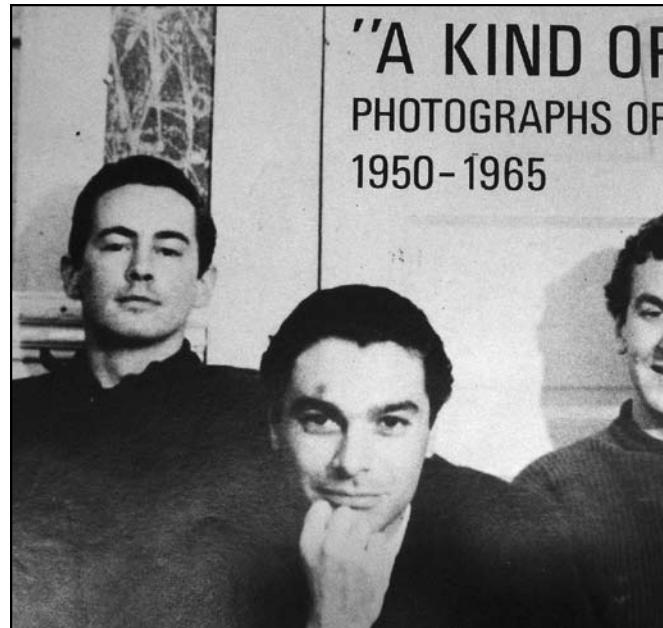
Hanna Chedyak's Fog Hill Market to get the in-depth news from overseas. When Chedyak bought the market some years ago, the previous owners were already stocking newspapers from abroad, a tradition he has maintained. Now such publications as *The Observer*, *The Guardian*, *Paris Match* and *L'Equipe* allow customers to keep up with everything from House of Commons diatribes to Italian soccer scores. Fog Hill stocks all of these and any other papers neighbors request. "There's a group of people who come in regularly for their French language fix," Chedyak says, adding, "We also stock *High Times*, but maybe in San Francisco that doesn't qualify as unique."

1300 Kearney 781-8817

## Schein & Schein

Neighbors know that Jimmie and Marti Schien bring an artistic eye to framing a work of art. They also know that Jimmie and Marti will sell you a rare botanical print, an antique map, or a 1947 copy of *The Ladies Home Journal* at a reasonable price. They further note that Jimmie seems just as happy providing browsers with his informed audio tour of a 19<sup>th</sup> century San Francisco Zoning Plan Map as he does in making a sale.

So what would the Schiens identify as unique in their little shop of wonders? Jimmie settles on the recently acquired *Modern Electricity Atlas*, published



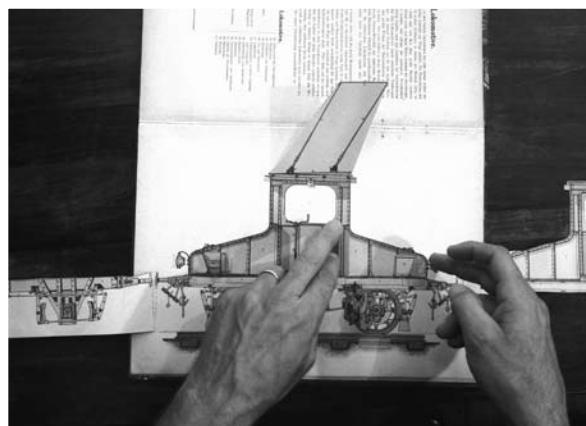
in Germany in 1900. It's a pop up book for engineers. Here Jimmie fingers the layers of an illustration of an Electric Locomotive, a digital (in the old sense) journey that will show him what is inside the engine's wheels and what's inside of what's inside those wheels.

Jimmie says the atlas links up to the "history of Germany as an emerging industrial power during these years. An engineer at the time could get accurate and detailed information just by peeling back the layers of these renderings."

1435 Grant, 399-8882

## The Beat Museum

The Beat Museum seems to be collecting more significant memorabilia every day. There's a customer who scours flea markets for items for Beat stuff and brings it to shop owner Jerry Cimano. And, says Jerry, the recession has unfortunately led some people to give up their treasured Beat era items in order to pay the rent. The museum is something



# “BEATNESS” A NORTH BEACH ERA



the 1975 exhibition catalogue for a show at the Focus Gallery by various photographers of the Beat Era. “I think there are only a couple of these left,” said Cimano. Shown is the catalogue’s cover. That’s Michael McClure on the left

540 Broadway, 1-800-537-6822

## Conor Fennessy Antiques and Design

Conor Fennessy’s shop is filled with items that please his discerning eye. There’s a photo by Robert Altman, “Winterland New Years Eve, 1969,” a large Ethiopian Hippo Hide Shield, a modernist bronze sculpture by Estelle Goodman and a 19<sup>th</sup> century bust of Diana, Goddess of the Hunt. But perhaps the item in this eclectic collection that most deserves the label “unique” is “San Francisco Terrain,” a work that Conor crafted himself. This is a 10” by 10” inch limited-edition gypsum tile depicting the topography of San Francisco

of a hodge podge of vintage photos, letters, magazines, newspaper clippings and album covers along with such tourist pleasers as an “I’m with Ginsberg” tee shirts and a beatnik bobble head doll.

When we asked Jerry about a unique item in his collection, he brought out *A Kind of Beatness*,

Says Conor, “When we walk through the city it’s hard to fully perceive the raw beauty of the land. The topography is a visceral experience of the shapes and contours that evolved over centuries.”

Former San Francisco Poet Laureate Jack Hirschman even wrote a poem to San Francisco Terrain that begins:

*Looks like a painting  
Feels like a sculpture  
Reads like a map  
801 Columbus, 673-0277*

## Urban Burp

Here we see shop owner Electra Skilandat displaying a one-of-a-kind fabric from the 1950s that would very much compliment the interior of a renovated Moderne North Beach Library restoration, if that ever happens. The great majority of fabrics in Electra’s vintage fabric store are unique, as they were created by designers commissioned to decorate a particular interior.

This material is at the far end of the six decades in her fabric collection. She showed us a nature oriented fabric, typical of the 30s and one with a fruit bowl and flowers that would have been very “now” in the 40s. Urban Burb is a trip through the decorative history of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

170 Columbus, 399-8761



# NOT JUST A CHOPHOUSE

By Carol Peterson

Joe DiMaggio's, 601 Union St., San Francisco  
415.421.5633

My girlfriend and I were at the new Fior d'Italia, reminiscing about the old Fior d'Italia—now Joe DiMaggio's—when she made a categorical statement. "Joe DiMaggio's has the best Happy Hour in town. The food and drinks are terrific and it is so reasonable." Now, this piqued my interest as I have always thought of Joe's as a chophouse, with a big ticket after the meal. Although I had eaten at the restaurant on a couple of occasions, it was always the well designed bar with its casual atmosphere that, for me, had special allure. And who wouldn't feel comfortable keeping company with Marilyn and Joe?

So we visited Joe DiMaggio's one quiet week day evening to check out the source of my friend's excitement. There is indeed a Happy Hour, 3 to 6, Tuesday through Saturday, when all drinks and food on the menu are \$5 each. On Sundays the same menu and prices apply all day long, and a jazz group entertains from 6 to 9.

We started with drinks: First, the Flame of Love, made with Triple Five Vodka with a peel of orange that is set on fire to enhance its essence. A great start. But the best drink in the house is the Hemingway Daiquiri, made with Superior Rum, Maraschino cherry liqueur, fresh grapefruit and lime juice. If this was, in fact, "Papa" Ernest's creation, he could have had a second career as a mixologist.

Both of the Happy Hour salads are delicious and a bargain at \$5. The chopped salad consists of romaine, tomatoes, olives, cucumber, red grapes and Point Reyes blue cheese. It has a light oil and champagne vinegar dressing. The classic Caesar salad is

just that, with shaved imported parmesan cheese, white anchovies and a delectable creamy dressing.

Four very thin crusted pizzas are offered, but the standout is the Baked Cambozola Cheese Pizza. It comes with an olive oil basted crust. In the center sits a very generous baked pastry covered Cambozola square of cheese, a generous dollop of finely chopped sun dried tomatoes and a whole roasted garlic. The diner squeezes the garlic and rubs its buttery clove on the crust, then spreads the oozing cheese and tomatoes. The presentation is beautiful and the concept unusual. The result: one of the best tasting pizzas I have had.

If you are a lover of a thick crust and are really hungry, the Sausage Calzone, with fennel sausage, olives, caramelized onion, spinach and ricotta is your dish. It is complimented by a sparse, light, fresh tomato sauce.

DiMaggio's General Manager, Brian Keene, joined us to answer questions about what inspired this wonderful idea of a complete \$5 menu. He told us that the restaurant wanted to create cost effective lighter fare to go with the bar atmosphere. "We wanted to combine very good food and a very good price."

We also met Tracey Rice, the Special Events Manager. She told us DiMaggio's had fashioned a pre fixe menu for \$34.95, a 3 course menu that can include a fillet mignon offering. Tracy laughed, "Of course, this is not for the guy who is looking for the big Porterhouse, but most of our customers love the filet."

Some night after work, when you are tired and want to relax and enjoy a bite to eat, stop by Joe DiMaggio's and say hello to Marilyn for me.



# MASON STREET CLOSES—FOR NOW

by Julie Christensen

Just as fairy godmothers can turn pumpkins into coaches and mice into footmen, City staff and devoted neighbors have temporarily turned a short section of Mason Street into a public piazza. Representatives of RecPark, DPW, the Library and other City departments, Supervisor Chiu and aid Jamie Cantwell and dozens of North Beach neighbors did a one-day makeover of Mason Street on Saturday, August 1. By late afternoon the space was filled with residents and visitors, as if it had always been there.

The street is being closed for 2 months to study, in real time, the effects of that closure on area traffic as part of the North Beach Library/Joe DiMaggio Playground master plan study. With North Beach lacking in parks and civic spaces, and the City's Pavements to Parks project

gaining such enthusiastic support, the idea of converting the street to a public plaza during the traffic study period gained momentum and was approved. Rebar, the local design collective that created the Park(ing) Day movement and that was responsible for turning Civic Center Plaza into a harvestable victory garden last year, developed a concept for the space and City staff and volunteers pitched in to make it come to life.

Neighborhood-centered casual gatherings will take place through September—bocce tournaments, poetry readings, kids crafts. Neighbors are encouraged to come and visit. People who have ideas for low-key entertainment or celebrations or who want to steer clear of other gatherings should contact Donna Faure at [donnafaure@yahoo.com](mailto:donnafaure@yahoo.com) to tap into the Mason Green calendar. ☺



# ART & CULTURE SALON CELEBRATES HISTORY ON THE HILL

by Kathleen Cannon and Art Peterson

**O**n July 29, Canessa Gallery was filled with THDers with special memories of living on Telegraph Hill and North Beach. Sponsored by the THD Art & Culture Committee's Storytelling Salon, Tales of North Beach, the event allowed speakers each five minutes to tell their stories. But memories spark memories. One person's narrative inspired another, and the evening became a rich and vivid tapestry of oral history. The event was recorded by Judy Irving and can be accessed at [www.THD.org](http://www.THD.org). Here are a few excerpts.



## Danny Macchiarini

It was the "Age of Beatniks." Danny saw a distinct figure in black walking a lion down Grant Avenue. The lion was roaring. The figure was Anton LeVey,

founder of the Church of Satan, who had recently written in the *San Francisco Chronicle* that God is dead. The San Francisco Board of Supervisors declared lions were *verboten* in North Beach.



## GiGi of Sotto Mare Restaurant, Green Street

GiGi was a young child when he arrived in North Beach from a farm in Umbria, Italy. He remembers a big Easter egg hunt in Washington Square Park, 3 bocce ball lanes at the Savoy Tivoli, four butchers in North Beach and games rolling ball bearings down a hill "because we had no balls."

## Kathleen Dooley

Kathleen recalls parties along Napier Lane with Grace Marchant who served plum wine. On Halloween, Grace would dress up as a witch. Everyone carved pumpkins and placed them along the stairs. When tour busses arrived, it was obvious the parties had become too popular.



## Tina Smelzer

In 1963, at four years old, Tina moved to North Beach from the East Bay. Her family lived at Powell and Stockton. One horrible night, her house caught fire and her brother as well. The fireman who saved her brother died. Later Joe Sullivan, his partner and friend, connected with Tina and she got to say "thank you".

## Mark Bittner

Mark came to San Francisco in 1970s to be a Hippie. He had been in high school, reading the Beats. His literary hero was the poet Gregory Corso. Living on the streets, he did not have an easy time of it. "Hip people had nothing to do with me. I was too working class." One day Mark crossed the street to avoid one of the most disreputable characters in



North Beach, "a known hassler." As it turned out, that person was Gregory Corso.

## June Osterberg

June came to San Francisco "before the Beats, before the Hippies" Everyone was reading *Laughter on the*

## Art & Culture Salon Celebrates Hill History *continued from page 24*

Hill by Margaret Atkins. It was during this time that June remembers pitching in to paint the soon to be famous Hungry I.



### Aaron Peskin

Aaron tells a story of periodically homeless Earl Tibedou, his acquaintance from Café Trieste.

One night at Grant & Green, Earle came in swinging a machete. Officer Mark Alvarez arrived on the scene and, instead of shooting Earle, tackled him. Earle put the machete on a table. Sometime later, Earle got new clothes and a new attitude and decided to run for Supervisor in District #3. He needed to raise funds to get his name on the ballot. And it was Officer Alvarez who contributed the last \$20 that made Earle a candidate.

### Joe Butler

Joe recalls a time when the Grace Marchant Garden needed to raise \$200k to keep the bulldozer away. Jane Winslow took charge off "selling off" square inches of the garden to raise money.

### Zach Stewart

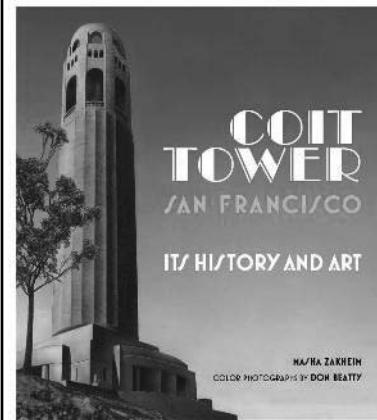
"This building [Canessa] was scheduled to be torn down. My house on Water Street was also scheduled to be torn down. THD saved them."



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# WHAT'S SPECIAL ABOUT APPLETON?

by Sue Cauthen

**E**fforts to enthron the Appleton & Wolfard libraries in the pantheon of architectural treasures has unified the preservation and good government communities across San Francisco.

At least two of these libraries, including the North Beach branch, are candidates for the wrecking ball. Readyng the heavy equipment is San Francisco Public Library (SFPL), which wants to replace them with large new structures. And therein lies the rub.

Opponents range from Telegraph Hill Dwellers to the Sunset neighborhood group, with SFTomorrow and the Coalition for San Francisco Neighborhoods thrown in for good measure. Friends of the Library and the Friends of Joe DiMaggio Playground have hoisted their banner on the other side.

Like many land use sorties, the Save the Appletons effort has bounced from the Board of Appeals to the Historic Preservation Commission to the Board of Supervisors.

The famed architects Appleton & Wolfard designed the North Beach library and seven others, beginning in the mid-1950s. Considered prime examples of the modern movement in architecture, the Appletons have recently been lauded by *Architectural Heritage*, *Docomomo* and the Preservation Consortium, to cite a few.

With their spacious interiors, ample use of natural light, beamed ceilings, handsome gables and over-

hangs, walls of windows and comfortable seating, the Appletons reflect the first stirrings of the egalitarian trend to build warm and welcoming libraries whose form embraces their function.

The respected architectural historians Carey & Company has found the graceful North Beach library to be eligible for both the National Register of Historic Places and the California Register of Historic Resources.

This followed the Planning Department's de facto designation of the Appleton & Wolfard-designed library as a "historic resource," triggering the Carey analysis and a full-blown environmental impact report (EIR). And scarcely had the EIR study begun when the National Trust for Historic Preservation signed on in favor of restoration and expansion of the library.

A decade ago, the voters passed a \$106 million general obligation bond to fund modernization of 24 branch libraries. North Beach was due for a \$3.5 million makeover and a moderate expansion, beginning around 2003. Ditto for the seven other Appleton libraries (Marina, Excelsior, Western Addition, Parkside, Ortega, Merced and Eureka Valley.). In fact, an *Architectural Heritage* article at the time applauded the library's plan to retain and enhance the Appleton libraries, all of which were deemed historically significant.

They still are, according to the new Historic Preservation Commission, which intends to consider a proposal to designate the group a "non-linear, multi-property historic district." Sources say the plan includes a look at landmarking the North Beach library.

Source of the brouhaha is the bond program to modernize the branch library system. This includes making them ADA-accessible and seismically sound and code compliant, with state-of-the-art computer capacity.

Back in 2003, SFPL put the North Beach project

*continued on page 27*



## What's Special About Appleton? continued from page 26

on hold because of the battle over condos or open space on the Triangle. As a result, North Beach went to the end of the line. Meanwhile, SFPL had racked up a deficit of nearly \$50 million. But the library got permission to issue revenue bonds again to finish the job.

The present plan calls for tear-down of North Beach branch and two other historic libraries (Ortega and Bayview) and erection of massive structures costing as much as \$1100 per square foot. At over \$900/square foot (\$1300 if you add the money paid to buy the Triangle via eminent domain) the proposed North Beach library is a two-story building that rises to 30 feet at the midpoint of a lot with an upward slope of 13 feet.

Opponents say the structure blocks views and sightlines from Columbus and Fisherman's Wharf, and is so large it extends 24 feet into Mason Street, overwhelming its surroundings with a look that is incompatible with the neighborhood. Proponents point to the views from the second story and the new park land to be gained, plus the cutting edge amenities.

Compare the SFPL plan with the sensitive and elegant restoration and expansion of the Marina library, another Appleton located in a playground. SFPL did the work for under \$4 million (or \$500 a square foot). Significantly, SF Weekly dubbed the Marina library "the best 'new' branch in San Francisco."

Currently, there is considerable community push-back over the planned demolitions and the makeover of Merced branch. Folks who think North Beach wrote the book when it comes to land use skirmishes

should take a look at preservation efforts at two West of Twin Peaks' Appletons: Merced and Ortega.

Demolition plans for the latter sparked a packed Board of Appeals hearing, which ended in a 3-2 vote for tear-down.

Merced library neighborhood leader Aaron Goodman is poised to appeal to the Board of Supervisors to overturn the exemption from environmental analysis. He says the SFPL update affects the integrity of the Appleton design by placing a large "box" in the courtyard entrance. Goodman is also concerned that the lack of notice circumvented adequate discourse.

He joins the preservation community in asserting that plans for North Beach, Ortega and Merced libraries were made "without reference to the significance of Appleton & Wolfard's body of work."

They say adaptive reuse of historic buildings is cheaper, quicker and greener and argue that irreversible actions like demolition should be the result of an open and deliberate process.

Perhaps the ultimate irony reverts to North Beach. Neither city librarian Luis Herrera nor his predecessor wanted a library on the Triangle. Wrong shape, tiny lot and even murmurs of bad feng shui. Susan Hildreth called a halt to Mason Street's closure plans for that reason, while Herrera also favored another site. In fact, a Sunshine request revealed that he wrote colleagues that "a two-story library on the Triangle won't work."



## sem.a.phore

**DEFINITION:** *To convey information using visual signals, such as flags, lights and mechanical arms.*

In the 19th century, Telegraph Hill was a lookout spot. A man stood at the top and watched for ships arriving through the Golden Gate. He used semaphore signals to spell out ships' names to the people below who were waiting for goods and mail. Neighbors who formed Telegraph Hill Dwellers in 1954 named their newsletter to salute this early use of the Hill.



## COIT TOWER: NORTH SLOPE FOREST MANAGEMENT & UPPER SLOPE VIEW RESTORATION

by Judy Irving

**O**n September 30th, twenty aging Monterey cypress trees will be removed from Telegraph Hill near the Coit Tower parking lot, and on Saturday, October 3rd, PG&E volunteers will help remove brush and prepare the cleared areas for planting. But why, in a city with so few trees, are any being cut down at all? Here's the scoop:

If you've been up to Coit Tower recently, you've no doubt seen tourists milling around the parking lot, confused and perplexed because they can't see the view. Further, the Monterey cypress trees up there are not happy—they've been "topped" for too long. The Pioneer Park Project, the same community group that installed the new stairways and created the south lawn, is moving ahead with a plan that will allow some of the cypresses to keep growing to their natural heights, while also removing some trees to provide three new view corridors. The ailing cypresses will be replaced by native plants that don't grow so high. Only one native-plant view corridor exists now, toward the Golden Gate Bridge. The new corridors will open up views to the northwest, north, and northeast.

Joe Butler, former chair of THD's Parks & Trees Committee, gave me a tour of the existing native trees and shrubs that have been planted around Coit Tower in recent years, and the landscape designers of the new plan showed me which trees would be removed and which ones would be allowed to grow to full height. Lord knows, I'm not in favor of cutting down trees willy-nilly, but this is a well-thought-out

project with earlier experimental plantings to learn from. Below are some answers to questions I had after making my site visits and reading the project's tree report:

1) There are no "significant trees" in the project area, since they are all more than the required distance from the right-of-way. There are no "landmark" trees either, as far as we know.

2) I asked why some of the "fair" condition trees were marked for removal, while some of the "all but dead" trees were not marked for removal. Answer: Trees are being removed from three "finger" areas to open up views to the northwest, north, and northeast. In the tree report, while some of the twenty trees marked for removal are "fair," all of them were judged to have "poor" restoration potential (i.e., they do not have good potential to grow into healthy, well-shaped cypresses, even with pruning). The remaining "all but dead" cypresses which are not in view corridors will potentially be candidates for replacement in coming years, but not now.

3) The project is following the tenets of "adaptive management," i.e., go slowly, see what works and what doesn't, and adapt strategies to what actually works on the Hill (while replanting with native shrubs and trees).

4) Some of the cypresses framing the view corridors will be allowed to grow tall, even those that have been topped in the past. Hopefully they will fill out and look better as they are allowed to grow, but they may need pruning as well. There is one tree with an interesting gnarly trunk that will be allowed to grow

*continued on page 29*

## PARKS, TREES, & BIRDS REPORT

tall, and will hopefully turn into Telegraph Hill's own picturesque "Pt. Lobos cypress" some day.

5) There is one native shrub view corridor that was planted about ten years ago, which reaches all the way to the pedestrian path below. I was assured that lessons learned from this and other plantings around Coit Tower will be incorporated into future planting schemes. In particular, the view fingers will not reach so far down the slope, so that the view is not opened up all the way to the path; and trees like oaks will not be planted in the view corridors, because oaks will eventually get too tall, obstructing

views again in the future. The new plantings will be arranged so that the natural height of the plants creates a relatively even plane (taller plants downslope, shorter shrubs upslope), above which people can see the view beyond. Because these plants will be allowed to grow to their natural heights, pruning in the view corridors should not be necessary.

For all of these reasons I support the project, and I encourage THD members to do so as well. I was told by Maggie Cleveland, RPD's Park Section Supervisor for Chinatown/North Beach, that they

*continued on page 33*



Vines smothering this native California Live Oak will be removed and the tree will be pruned and shaped.

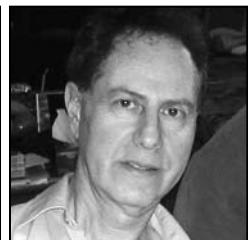
# PARKING & TRAFFIC REPORT

by Gail and Paul Switzer

**T**he restricted weekend parking trial at Coit Tower began June 6 and ends September 27.

Near the half-way point our most important goal is being met—lines to park at Coit Tower on weekends are small or non-existent and the 39 bus is no longer delayed by Telegraph Hill weekend traffic jams. And at last report ridership on the 39 bus has increased substantially. The trial was planned and implemented by a city/neighborhood Coordinating Committee with significant participation from THD. Please continue to show your support for our bus by riding it often.

We are learning much from the trial. Dissemination of information about the weekend parking restrictions and the bus alternative was not easy. An attractive and informative brochure was distributed to wharf hotels and visitor information locations although production of the brochure took longer than expected. The City issued a press release regarding the weekend parking restriction at Coit Tower although this



was not produced until after the start of the trial. The parking lot still attracts illegally parked visitor cars on weekends, albeit in fewer numbers, and enforcement of parking restrictions has been spotty at best.

Further efforts are planned to increase ridership on the 39 bus, particularly aimed at visitors to Coit Tower. These include possible rebate incentive programs in connection with parking garages, production of posters for placement at visitor locations and on buses and trams, and a stronger 39-friendly web presence [check the Wikipedia article for Coit Tower]. Also, look for a route change for the 39 bus at Fisherman's Wharf that will put a new stop right at Pier 39. The route change should be effective later in the fall.



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## CAN YOU HELP?

I am looking for vintage images, little known facts and stories of North Beach, which is, in my opinion, one of the most interesting neighborhoods in the world. These are for my book *Images of America-San Francisco's North Beach and Telegraph Hill*, to be published in late 2010 by Arcadia Publishing.



P.O. Box 330168  
SF CA 94133-0168

[hackett.philip@gmail.com](mailto:hackett.philip@gmail.com)

If you can help, please contact me, Catherine Acardi at [caacat@comcast.net](mailto:caacat@comcast.net). I want to incorporate into my book little known facts and rarely seen images that contributed to the history of North Beach.

If you're looking for something unique, you're sure to find it at THE CANNERY at Del Monte Square! Once the world's largest fruit & vegetable cannery as Del Monte's Plant #1, THE CANNERY is a dramatic urban space modeled after old European piazzas showcasing unique shops, galleries, restaurants, bars and live entertainment. Today it is home to unique shops and restaurants. Every day and night, THE CANNERY is alive with festivities and activities for all ages.

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And then there are my own photos taken in the 1970s and 1980s. The children are in the North Beach playground, the man is in Washington Square.

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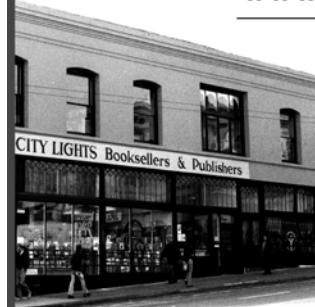
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have plenty of experienced "hands" from PG&E on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, who will be digging with pick axes, shoveling, chipping, lifting, carrying, doing erosion wattle placements and tie downs, etc. Neighbors are welcome to come see what's going on, but probably won't be needed as volunteers that day. We'll publicize later planting/weeding days so you can get your hands in the dirt.

### Valetta Heslet Garden Vine Removal & Pruning Projects

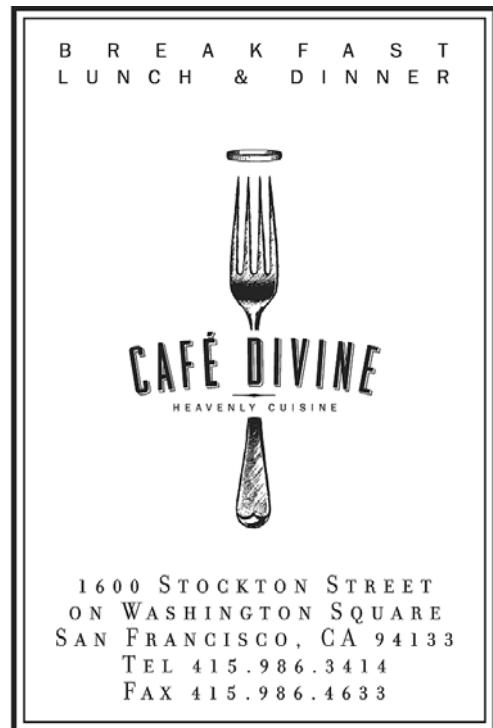
Ian Butler, a licensed, insured, certified arborist, will do the following work in the 200 block of Greenwich, hopefully in September:

1. trim small acacia trees at top of lower stairs;
2. trim back plum tree that extends over the walkway;

3. trim back juniper that is blocking the street-light; and

4. remove vines from the native California live oak.

All of the brush will be carried to the bottom of the stairs by the arborist and/or his assistants. DPW has agreed to pick up and haul the debris away; I will schedule this with Sandra Zuniga of the Street Park program. Later, Ted Kipping of Tree Shapers will remove dead wood and prune/shape the large California live oak (after Ian removes the vines). I hope to schedule Kippings work in October. The THD Board voted to approve both these projects in August, and will be reimbursed by the Northeast San Francisco Conservancy's "Valetta Heslet Garden Fund."



# ART & CULTURE REPORT

by Julie Jaycox

**T**he Art & Culture Committee has developed a new Mission Statement: "Art & Culture supports creating community—in Telegraph Hill and vicinities—between artists, businesses and neighbors, by utilizing the talents, cooperation and generosity of all."

**Park(ing) Day, Friday, September 18<sup>th</sup>** Join us for an Art & Culture open air PARK(ing) space in the 1500 block of upper Grant Avenue along with other green parking space 'rehab's' by local businesses. Enjoy a fun alternative way to share public space on the street. See you there!

**In August, Art & Culture passed a motion** to list any committee member related art exhibitions in the *Semaphore*.

And here they are:

- "Anonymous Portraits" by Termeh Yeghiazarian @ Canessa Gallery, 708 Montgomery, the month of October
- Photography by Angela Manginelli @ Vesuvio Cafe, 255 Columbus Ave, October 15-31st, 2009
- Paintings by Candace Loheed @ Orangeland, 1250 Mason, the month of October
- Masks by Carol Peterson through September, Gallery 128, 128 Grant
- North Beach's own Open Studios, **Art Walk 2009**, on Oct. 24-25th, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Take a look and support local artists and businesses.



## THE NEW THD T-SHIRT IS HERE

Show off your neighborhood pride with the new Telegraph Hill Dwellers t-shirt. The 100% cotton black t-shirt features NORTH BEACH on the chest, and the THD logo on the right sleeve. Also available as a 100% cotton fleece long-sleeved hooded pullover sweatshirt for those chilly San

Francisco summer nights. Quantities are limited, so reserve yours today



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# DEPRESSION ERA GARDEN RAISES CROPS AND SPIRITS

**L**ocated on a tiny, 9x12 patch of land literally on the very edge of a Telegraph Hill cliff, THD members Kathleen Dooley, Katie Hopkins and Astrid Keane have created a modern day vegetable Victory Garden. Starting in late spring, the 3 women, with the weekend help of teen neighbor Joey Ingram, cleared out blackberries, ivy and anise and

planted lettuce, tomatoes, herbs, squash, radishes, an apple tree and other edibles.

Taking their cue from Depression era neighborhood gardens, they decided to try to grow enough to feed themselves as well as other nearby neighbors who have contributed, besides sweat power, earthworm castings as fertilizer (Glenn Kersey) and the

components (soon to be installed by handyman, Aaron Peskin) for a drip irrigation system. So far, not only has the garden produced enough for their goal but, unexpectedly, has also produced enough to provide the monthly St Vincent de Paul dinners for our North Beach homeless neighbors with their salad for the past several months.

As the 15 healthy tomato plants become heavy with their crop, the neighbors are now researching the many uses of what looks to be a bumper crop and are planning at least one canning session to produce the base for many tomato themed winter meals. Kathleen Dooley says, "This was our first year as urban farmers so we see it as a trial and error garden - what works and what was a flop and look forward to an even more successful vegetable patch in 2010. We are so happy with the results of this season and it has been a lot of fun. It would be great to see more gardens like this popping up around our section of town".



Victory Gardens make the Hill bountiful.



# THD BOARD MOTIONS

FOR THE MONTHS OF MAY-JULY 2009

MOTION: To increase annual dues by \$5.00 per year effective September 1, 2009. New rates:

Individual	\$30
Senior (Over 65)	\$20
Household	\$45
Senior Household (over 65)	\$35

**The Motion passed.**

traffic study and evaluation of the traffic impact upon adjacent streets and businesses.

**The Motion passed.**

MAY, 2009

MOTION: To approve the THD 2009-2010 budget.

**The Motion passed.**

JUNE, 2009

No Motions

JULY, 2009

No Motions



## ATTENTION, THD MEMBERS

The Telegraph Hill Dwellers **Semaphore** Needs Your Help.

For several years Kathleen Cannon, our intrepid **Semaphore** ad sales person, has been beating the sidewalks of our picturesque neighborhood in a quest for the advertising that keeps our publication alive. It's due to her efforts that we have been able to expand and improve **The Semaphore**.

But it's a lonely mission and Kathleen needs your help. Here's how:

1. Take out a **Semaphore** ad for your business or service.
2. Contact a business that you love and loves you about taking an ad. If you'll do the "leg work," we'll make the "close."
3. Volunteer to assist Kathleen in her ad selling quest.

LET'S WORK TO KEEP OUR **VOICE OF THE  
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**Here are our reasonable ad rates:**

Business Card —	2X3: one issue \$45.00, one year \$155
Junior Ad —	3X3: one issue \$ 80.00, one year \$285
½ Page —	3.5X6: one issue, \$145, one year, \$525
Full Page —	7X6: one issue, \$265, one year, \$975

For more information or to place an ad, call or email

Art Peterson, **Semaphore** Editor, 956-7817/[apeterson@nwp.org](mailto:apeterson@nwp.org)

# THE ALFA NOSE

By Kathleen Cannon

*Spider Veloce '77 explores poetry, art, architecture and culture around North Beach and Telegraph Hill—the International Poetry Festival, Piazza St. Francis, Pavement to Parks, Hollywood and Beat Notes.*

Former Poet Laureate Lawrence Ferlinghetti has founded the Piazza St. Francis Association, a 501.C3 Foundation, which is working toward closure of Vallejo Street between Grant Avenue and Columbus. ([www.piazzastfrancis.us](http://www.piazzastfrancis.us)) Tony Gantner assisted in putting the foundation together. There have been and will continue be substantial fundraisers toward their dream of a European style Piazza in this space. The City, however, is broke so is not putting in any money.

Nearby, Angela Alioto's Renaissance Project envisions the St. Francis Shrine as a world destination for Pilgrims [www.shrinerenewal.org](http://www.shrinerenewal.org), the only sanctioned shrine for St. Francis of Assisi in the U.S. Alioto's project has also had several fundraisers, another of which is scheduled for the 3rd week in September. It is important to note that the two are separate projects. One is secular. One is affiliated with the Catholic Church. When these two projects come together, they will meet in a plaza between St. Francis of Assisi Shrine and Café Trieste. Picture a plaza with tables, chairs, umbrellas. Perhaps a fountain—a world class destination.

## Retro Fitting for St. Francis

The original plan to retrofit St. Francis of Assisi Shrine was an-\$8M- \$10M project. However, the Diocese, another victim of the recession, could only contribute \$1.2M, so the project has been cut back. Work will begin at the top. The spires will be retrofitted and plastered and painted where necessary. More extensive plans for painting the outside of church will be postponed until a later date. Another

stage in the plans is to renovate the rectory. Nibby Brothers are handling the partial retrofit. Construction may begin in early October, and the Shrine will be closed for 9 months.



## International Poetry Festival

July 23rd, Jack Kerouac Alley by City Lights Bookstore was the cool hot spot for launching the International Poetry Festival. Twenty-two poets, 13 women and 13 men, were invited from all over the world. Working together with Lawrence, Ferlinghetti, Jack Hirschman, another former Poet Laureate, organized the project. "The festival was very successful," said Jack. "It gave people the opportunity to hear poets from other countries in their native languages." Jack cited Ignatius Mabase, the leading poet of Mbabwa who is restoring his native language, Shona. Other poetic languages included Haitian, Farsi, and Welsh. The Festival also gave voice to new and young poets.

Jack is also the Poet in Residence of the S.F. Library. He attributes the success of the festival to Friends of the S.F. Library that raised funds to fly in the poets for readings, paid them a stipend, and covered air and hotel. All the events were according to Jack pleasantly "overcrowded at the North Beach Library, the Palace of Fine Arts and the Beat Museum."

If you're wondering, Dian DiPrima, a well known chronicler of the Beat Generation, is the current S. F. Poet Laureate.

## Other News

Café Trieste hosted a reunion of Woodstock musicians, including regular Paul Kantner of the Jefferson Airplane,

The Beat Museum on Wheels has been resurrected for mobile readings. The 1987 Airstream RV's destination on September 26-26th is Ft. Mason, for the first mobile event in a couple of years.





# TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS

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## THD COMMITTEES NEED YOU

You can make a difference! Join one of THD's committees, meet and work with your fellow Hill Dwellers to improve life on the Hill.

### STANDING COMMITTEES

PARKING AND TRANSPORTATION. Gail and Paul Switzer. Promotes efforts to ease congestion, optimize white zones, upgrade public transportation. Works with Department of Parking and Traffic.

PLANNING AND ZONING. Nancy Shanahan, 986-7094, Mary Lipian, 391-5652. Monitors and reviews proposed development projects for consistency with applicable City ordinances. Works with Planning Department staff and represents THD before the Historic Preservation Commission, Planning Commission, Zoning Administrator and other regulating bodies to protect historic resources and maintain neighborhood character. Assists members to learn more about and participate in planning and zoning issues.

SEMAPHORE. Editor, Art Peterson 956-7817; [artpeterson@writingproject.org](mailto:artpeterson@writingproject.org). The editor and staff produce a quarterly magazine for THD members.

PROGRAM. Arranges social events, including quarterly membership meetings and get-acquainted social functions.

BUDGET. Gail Switzer, [gail\\_switzer@yahoo.com](mailto:gail_switzer@yahoo.com). As prescribed in bylaws for Treasurer.

MEMBERSHIP. Chris Stockton, [membership@thd.org](mailto:membership@thd.org). As prescribed in Bylaws for Financial Secretary.

ARCHIVIST: Rozell Overmire, [rozell@ureach.com](mailto:rozell@ureach.com)

### SPECIAL COMMITTEES AND PROJECTS

PARKS, TREES, AND BIRDS. Judy Irving, chair. Information and projects concerning local parks, green spaces and street trees.

THD WEB SITE. Webmaster, Al Fontes; [webmaster@thd.org](mailto:webmaster@thd.org). Shared information about meetings, local concerns and events.

ART AND CULTURE, Julie Jaycox. Organizes events and projects that celebrate the humanities and history of our neighborhood.

### LIAISONS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

COALITION FOR SAN FRANCISCO NEIGHBORHOODS. Representative, Gerry Crowley, 781-4201; [gerrycrowley@aol.com](mailto:gerrycrowley@aol.com). City-wide organization interacts with other neighborhoods to discuss common problems.

NORTH BEACH NEIGHBORHOOD COALITION. Representative, Gerry Crowley, 781-4201; [gerrycrowley@aol.com](mailto:gerrycrowley@aol.com). Tel-Hi-sponsored group of residents, merchants and government agencies working together to address neighborhood issues.

N.E.R.T. Jack Oswald, [jack@oswald.com](mailto:jack@oswald.com). Energizes members to take emergency disaster response training program sponsored by the City.

## WEB SITE = [www.thd.org](http://www.thd.org)

Whether you want to catch up on THD's Oral Histories, see what the THD is up to, or submit old photos of the Hill, [www.thd.org](http://www.thd.org) is the place to go. Use the Web site to discover or email information about upcoming meetings in the neighborhood and at City agencies, and ideas and concerns you want the rest of us to know about between Semaphores.

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### ***Schedules of Committee Meetings***

PLANNING & ZONING: First Thursdays. Call for time and location. 986-7070, 563-3494, 391-5652.

Look to the THD website for information on THD events. **Log on to <http://www.thd.org>**

## **For a Voice in Your Neighborhood Join Telegraph Hill Dwellers.**

THD Welcomes New Members June-August 2009: Lynne Joiner, Angela Manginelli, and Marilee Gaffney, Trudi & Kevin Loscutoff, and Miriam & Roderick Owen, William Sauro, Janme Shiota, and Leslie Cancel & Ned Boynton.

## **NEW MEMBER INFORMATION**

Sign Up or Sign a Friend Up as a member of Telegraph Hill Dwellers. Complete and mail to THD, PO Box 330159, SF, CA 94133

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ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

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